

# THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

*This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.*

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## THE CHURCH AND THE RETURN OF THE FORCES

### MORE PLANS MADE BY ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH CHURCHES

The return of the Forces, and the Church's plans for welcoming them, continue to engage the attention of active Church circles in Great Britain. This week we bring information concerning two pamphlets on the subject. One is published as a report to the Presbytery of Stirling and Dunblane, and appears under the signature of the Very Rev. J. Hutchison Cockburn, D.D., recently Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; the other is by the Rev. W. H. Maxwell Rennie, Vicar of St. Jude-on-the-Hill, Hampstead Garden Suburb, with the co-operation of Mr. L. D. Gibbin. The latter pamphlet is on sale (Evans Bros., London, 1s. 6d.). Dr. Cockburn (The Cathedral Manse, Dunblane, Perthshire) will send a copy to any applicant who sends an addressed stamped *foolscap* envelope.

#### A Scottish Plan

The Scottish report is being sent to all Ministers and members of the Sessions in the Presbytery, and a conference on the whole subject is to be held in October.

It begins with a warning that a consideration of this subject does not imply that the war is all but over. This section was clearly written before the opening of the "Second Front," but its warning is, of course, still relevant. It urges the point, however, that it is not too early for plans to be made if the Church is to rise to the challenge and opportunity of the great "Return."

An appreciation of the problem to be faced then follows:

"In the first place it will be necessary to awaken the congregation to the fact that there is a problem, and that a great oppor-

tunity will be presented to them which they must face with courage and imagination. These men and women will have been away from home for four and five years, and will not fit easily into the life which they left years before. Moreover, even in those instances where they have kept a church connection by parade and other services, and attended 'Brains Trusts' and Padre's Hours, the type of worship in the Forces is different from that which will face them when they return. The services are shorter, the sermons are shorter, the hymns are not so varied, and it may be that the more dignified and lengthy and somewhat stereotyped services of our churches will not make an immediate appeal to their needs. Besides, they have been living in a very close fellowship with their comrades, and they may well be disappointed with the more detached life into which they will come, both in the congregation and in the community.

"In these circumstances, it will be necessary for congregations to cultivate a spirit of warmer friendliness and a greater enthusiasm. The desire to welcome back those who have done so much in the country's cause must be obvious. There ought to be willingness to change where changes are desirable. But first of all a friendly atmosphere will be a necessity. It will not be enough for the congregation simply to prepare social gatherings at which the men are welcomed. These, of course, will be provided; but it should be plain that these are not enough; even if these are generous and long continued, they will not by themselves meet the needs, which are deeper. There is a danger of the Church, in its endeavor to satisfy that aspect of the needs of the men and women, becoming a purveyor of various forms of entertainment which can be done far better by commercial

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concerns. Entertainment must have its place, and it will have a larger place than it has ever had in the congregational life; but in providing for this side of things, the Church must not forget its main functions of worship and service."

When practical plans are discussed, great stress is laid on the fact that the men and women will be returning to their *homes*. It is at this point, the report states, that the new contact between Church and people must be made. In the sphere of Church organization, the report suggests that the Evening Service on Sundays might be modified very considerably, so as to allow a programme of activities to be planned which would follow on the "Padre's Hours" and other activities to which Service men and women will have become accustomed. (This proposal clearly applies particularly to the arrangements of services common in the Church of Scotland: it might not be easily applicable in other situations.)

Considerable attention is given to the subject of enlisting the returning men and women in active service for Church and Community.

"We must now make reference briefly to that other important side of the Church's life—CHRISTIAN SERVICE. This is a side which should appeal to those who have spent some of their most precious years in the service of a cause they felt to be sacred.

"The Church must not fail to prove it can offer them as no other agency can the fullest opportunities for continuing on the royal highway of service.

"There will be TWO GROUPS of men and women returning from whom we may hope to find a response to this challenge.

"(I) THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN CHURCH WORK BEFORE THEY JOINED THE COLOURS.

"We cannot assume that they will automatically resume their places in the Sunday School, the Choir, or the Youth Organization. They are not coming back the same people they were when they left us. Perhaps even now their old interest in the work is dying.

"An urgent question for ministers, kirk sessions and leaders of organizations is—What have they been doing to maintain and develop the interest of absent fellow workers? . . .

"(II) The other Group from whom we may expect service in the Church is composed of THOSE WHO WERE NOT ACTIVE IN THE WORK OF THE CHURCH BEFORE THEY LEFT FOR THE FORCES.

"There are young men and women who as a result of their war experiences will have developed just the experience and qualities of leadership we need in the churches. There will be an abundance of excellent material. We must be ready to divert their interest and energies into the service of the Kingdom.

"RECRUITING must be undertaken, and it can begin now. Our Church, along with other denominations, has taken steps to appeal for candidates for the ministry. Recruiting for leaders and helpers in the organizations should be undertaken by the congregations. It may be done as informally as we care, though it would have greater weight if it came officially in the name of the congregation. . . .

"Where a congregation is of any size a small typed letter giving a comprehensive survey of the spheres of service within the congregation for which the recipient might volunteer, might be prepared and sent to all on service. . . .

"Then there is the wider field offered by YOUTH MOVEMENTS SPONSORED BY BODIES OTHER THAN THE CHURCH. It is of first importance that these should have Christian leadership. The Church should urge its returning men and women to consider the valuable service they might give there.

"It will be a tragedy," concludes Dr. Cockburn, "if a congregation cannot capture for the service of Christ's Church and Kingdom a large proportion of the fine personnel that will be at its disposal if the right appeal is made and we have our plans ready."

Certain appendices follow, intended to give information on the religious activities to which men and women have become accustomed in the Forces. After notes on the Discussion Group and the "Brains Trust," a District Chaplain gives the following interesting analysis of the "Padre's Hour," and what it has revealed about the attitude of modern men and women to the Church and to religion.

"I have now had nearly a year's experience in the taking of Padre's Hours.

"Broadly speaking, I would divide those attending into three groups.

"Group 'A.'—The members of this Group have enjoyed the advantages of a good education, and have had the background of a certain amount of religious training. In their homes there has been at least a measure of co-operation with the Church and religion. The members of this Group like having explained to them the Communion, Baptism, the Marriage Ceremony, the different forms



of Church Worship. They enjoy being instructed in the salient points in Church History, and they like to discuss the deeper aspects connected with prayer and immortality, etc. They appreciate missionary biographies and autobiographies. Questions in this Group are asked out of interest and are not put forward in an effort to trap you or side-track you. This Group is very ready to form a Committee which will suggest excellent subjects for discussion. Roughly speaking, the majority of the girls belong to this Group, though some belong to Groups 'B' and 'C.'

"Group 'B.'—The members of this Group have received no great amount of education. They are members of what is known as the labouring class. Their only link with the Church is perhaps their memory of the Sunday School and the fact that their children are now in turn members of a Sunday School. Strange though it may seem, I have found this Group to be very interested in the Padre's Hour.

"They seem to appreciate the fact that they are counted worthy to give a verdict on things. This Group is usually very interested in morality being kept high among their women folk. They are keen that their children receive a religious training. They like to hear about the lives of very well-known good people, i.e. people like David Livingstone. This Group has been the most unanimous in desiring that the Church should make use of the cinema for its work. Their conception of a good Minister is that he should be a very friendly and sincere man. The members of this Group are inclined to wonder what you are getting at if you speculatively go into questions connected with the fact of God and Prayer and so on. In their own way they have already accepted these things. They like talks on 'Friendship,' and the virtues, well illustrated with fairly obvious anecdotes. The members of this Group may sometimes be rough in exterior and in expression, but at bottom they are very sound. They appreciate a simple thing like this, that you are taking them into confidence to this extent, that you tell them what the subject of your next talk will be.

"Group 'C.'—This is the most difficult Group to handle. It is drawn from a very politically-minded class, i.e. the artisan class, male mechanics, workshop men. No matter what has been the subject matter under discussion, this class has tended to narrow the subsequent discussion down to the Soviet Experiment, the alleged ownership of slum property by the Church, the alleged failure

on the part of the Church to interest herself in social problems, the alleged inconsistency of certain prominent Church members. This class, too, has been the readiest to attack the doctrinal positions of Christianity. It, too, has been most prone to accuse the Church of interfering too much in what it styles the legitimate pleasures of the people, i.e. Sunday games and Sunday cinemas, etc. It is very clear that this type has been in the habit of listening to and of reading of systematic attacks upon the Church and upon the usual concepts in our society life. This form of criticism has tended to fall away when this type of group has been reminded of the new attitude of the Soviet to the Christian religion. The members of this Group have also been very interested in the 1925 and 1929 Acts relative to Church Union in Scotland, when these Acts were explained to them. It has also often been useful to recall to this type the attitude of well-known scientists and publicists who are favourable to religion and the Church.

"One has the suspicion that the industrial areas from which this class has been mostly recruited have been a little neglected by the Churches. It looks as if things would need to be managed so that some of the sharpest intellects among the Ministry of the Church of Scotland and other Churches should be encouraged to minister in some of the artisan parts of our industrial areas. One is thinking of men who are good at working in from the circumference of their subject to the centre. Highly liturgical services in churches in these areas should be avoided. This has come out very clearly from a taking of Chaplain's Hour. . . .

"My considered opinion is that the Army has done the Christian religion and the Church a most lasting good through its provision of Padre's Hour. It has broken down barriers between young people and the Ministers. It has made the Clergy see things as they are, and it has caused them to think out clearly and afresh their position. It has challenged them to see to it that there is no false note in their lives or in the lives of their Churches. All eyes are upon them."

### A London Parish Makes Its Plans

The English pamphlet, which need not be dealt with so fully as it is on sale, describes the problem in vivid and arresting style, and makes many practical suggestions, especially concerning the taking of "Censuses" of families with men and women on active service, and the keeping of proper records of their return. The experience of community spirit



developed in A.R.P. organizations is stressed as a fruitful source of inspiration as the Church tackles its own problem of the early post-war years. Stress is laid here, as in the Scottish scheme, on the great need to enlist the returning men and women in active service for the Church, in work which will give real scope to their "lay" qualifications.

## NORWEGIAN CHURCH PROTEST

On July 29th the Swedish paper, *Göteborgs Handelstidning*, published information about a recent protest of the Church of Norway.

"In all Norwegian churches on July 23rd a declaration was read, signed by all Church bodies in Norway, in which they protested against the Nazi treatment of the Norwegian Mission Organization. The text which was read from the pulpit is as follows: 'As you already know, the State authorities have taken violent measures against the Norwegian Mission Organization by dismissing its general committee and its general secretary and by nominating a new president and a new general secretary. This action has aroused great indignation and much disquiet in the parishes and among the people. This encroachment has produced an energetic protest from the committee of the organization and the district and regional committees. The officers have expressed their complete confidence in the general committee and they have stated that they are unable to collaborate with the newly-appointed heads. The regional and local organizations are ready to continue their work as before, so long as they are allowed to do it in accordance with their traditions. The Norwegian Mission Organization is the most ancient and the largest of its kind, and is occupied with the fundamental task of the living Church. Our whole Church is adversely affected by what has happened. The Norwegian Mission Council has sent a letter to the Minister of Cults on this subject, clearly expressing the views of all the friends of the Mission and of the whole of our Church.' The anger of the Norwegian people at these Nazi methods has increased since it has been known that Pastor Einar Amdahl, the general secretary, has been condemned to four years' imprisonment. He has been sent to a concentration camp at Berg where is also Dean Kornelius, who will shortly be brought before the tribunal. The Nazi action has three objects. First of all, it is part of the Nazi persecution of Christianity. Secondly the wealth of the Mission Organization is a strong temptation to the Nazis, and thirdly the Nazi Bishop, Kvasnes, wishes to revenge himself on his former col-

leagues, who dismissed him from the general committee because of his Nazi sympathies.

## A Pastor Released and Banished

"Pastor J. H. B. Bjønness-Jacobson," says *Aftontidningen*, "has been released from Grini. The reason is as follows: Some fishermen of Hvaler some time ago saved the occupants of a German aeroplane, which apparently had among its passengers a German general. Terboven rewarded them and asked them if they had any special wish. The fishermen asked for the liberation of their pastor. He was set at liberty, but soon afterwards he was dismissed by the Minister of Cults and banished to Lillehammer."

## AN AMERICAN CHAPLAIN IN RUSSIA

A Baptist pastor from Higham, Mass., is the first United States army chaplain in Soviet Russia. He is the Rev. Clarence G. Strippy, formerly minister of a church in the Boston suburb and now attached to the Eastern Command of the U. S. Air Forces. His job is to travel to and from American bases set up in various parts of the Soviet Union. He spends three days in each centre, holding services for Protestant and Jewish soldiers, and assisting Catholics to organize their own devotions.

When newspaper correspondents first arrived at this base, they saw a wiry, suntanned American leading a crowd of United States and Russian soldiers in the singing of "Tipperary." The scene was an open-air theater built by the Russians.

"Who's the man leading you fellows?" a correspondent asked an American lieutenant. The officer turned in surprise.

"Why, that's our 'chappie.' Our chaplain, you know. The best man in the camp."

Much of Chaplain Strippy's work is to bring his "boys" and the Russians into close friendship. One commentator, impressed by the chaplain's activities, described him as a "one-man service department." He has made music his hobby, and is keenly interested in athletics.

Talking to correspondents, Chaplain Strippy commended the Soviet authorities for making available to the U. S. Army all the space it needs for cemeteries. "This matter, which would be so simple in other countries," he said, "might have met a snag here, since land cannot be bought from private owners because all land belongs to the nation as a whole. But the Russians gave us land with the understanding that we may treat it as our own."—*The Churchman* (U.S.A., July 1).